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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"*****"

Well, the summer season is rapidly coming to a close. While I am ready to welcome the cooler weather, the season was much too short! It seems like just yesterday I was heralding the unofficial start of the summer; and now it's almost gone! I think I had better start thinking of taking a few days off between the two jobs while I still can. Maybe I'll finally get a chance to play a little golf before the season ends!

Lots of things going on in the world, but I just don't feel much like having a go at some of them this week. Political primaries in a number of states this week, but I'm tired of the wrangling going on these days with politicians. The bottom line is that our politicians aren't doing enough these days to get things going in a forward direction. Taking things a step at a time is fine, but we're following those steps with three or four steps backward! But, you don't need me to remind you all on just how brutal things are out there today!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, you know by now that the NewsGroup has slowed to a crawl these past several months. There just isn't enough going on to use here. I know it's not surprising, since Atari hasn't put out a computer in at least a decade and a half, and it sometimes amazes me that there's any discussion at all of Atari computers, once so prominent in the world of home computing.

I even used networked STs on the job for inventory and shipping for a while. It was quite a kick to be able to tell people that I was using neither PC nor Apple, and no, thank you very much, we weren't using TI-99/4A's either. [grin]

But those days are gone forever (although I understand that the TI-99/4A

still has a large, loyal following too), and things have changed greatly in the intervening years; Graphical User Interfaces are now the norm, with Windows and OS X and even Linux with its plethora of available 'desktops' like GNOME and KDE. And the next generation promises to do many things for us, like give us the ability to shrink, enlarge, change, move, morph and modify things right on the desktop with just our fingers or maybe even eye movements.

And, of course, all this wondrous magical ability will suck the life out of whatever processors Intel and AMD can come up with, and turn our computing power back to what it was in 1993.

Bells and whistles. That's what people want. Of course, people want EVERYTHING. They want the equivalent of a super computer in the palm of their hand and they want it for the cost of a fake Rolex bought on Broadway.

But there are those, like Bill Gates, who have the ability to drive not only the direction of their products, but the direction of technology itself. If Windows wasn't so demanding on a processor, I doubt offerings from Intel and AMD would be where they are now. If games and GUIs weren't so involved and intensive, I doubt that video cards would be as advanced as they are today.

Now, if you read this column with any frequency, you know that I have very few good things to say about Bill Gates. But I DO give credit where credit is due. He saw not only where the market was going, but where it COULD go. And he drove a huge portion of technology toward a place that it might not have gone otherwise. Many, if not most, of the things we take for granted today are more convenient, more accessible, more... useful.. than they would have been if Gates had been contented with DOS.

Apple is another case. Steve Jobs and Wosniak had a really cool idea: Offer a computer that people can afford. Start off by selling kits. When you can, offer them pre-assembled. Graduate to better and better, faster and faster computers. That's about there Steve Jobs shined brightly. The Apple][, the][g 'updated' machine, the different flavors of GUI based machines making use of the Motorola CPUs from the 68000 family through the Power PC chips, and then finally, when those processors could not provide performance to rival that of Intel's offerings, moving to Intel's processors.

I've always found Apple's machines... interesting. Once they got out of the Apple][series and began making their machines aesthetically pleasing instead of just boxy, functional "other choices", it became something of an event to see how they'd decided to "spiff up" their latest offerings. And they've done it very well.

Of course, like Microsoft, they've not been content to simply confine their business to computers. There's the iPod, the iPhone, the iPad, etc. not to mention iTunes. All useful offerings, although I must admit that I have none of the above. I've got no need of a smartphone like the iPhone, and instead of an iPod I opted for a much more affordable MP3 player from another manufacturer. I know, I know. There are bunches of you jumping up and down right now, shouting that it's so much more than an MP3 player... and you're right. But an MP3 player is all I need and want. I saw no need to "splurge" on an iPod.

Why am I mentioning all this stuff; Microsoft and Apple and Intel and AMD? Because they understood one thing that Atari didn't with its ST series. By

designing the machines from the start to be more affordable, they neglected to make them upgradeable. The OS was in firmware, the memory was set at a certain limit, the whole product made it almost impossible to upgrade. Even if you were good with a soldering iron and had the technical know-how, you had to deal with a limit in the OS and with the rest of the hardware itself. You couldn't go above 4 megabytes of RAM in an ST.

Video cards? Forget it. By the time more colors and better resolution became a sought-after by the PC world, the ST's market share had dropped to the point where it was barely worth designing something for it. It's an expensive proposition to design and build an interface, and the "pot of gold" at the end of the rainbow is always selling enough product to make it all worthwhile. That just wasn't possible with the ST by that time; people who are willing to do their own modifications and then dealing with the resulting software compatibility issues are a minority in any group, and the ST group was already small.

But having said that, I also realize that there ARE people out there still doing mods on and for the ST. Heck, there are still people designing and building incredibly ingenious things for the Atari 8-bit computers. But they do it for the same reason (or, rather the inverse reason) that some mountain climbers climb mountains. Because its there. Or, in this case, isn't there.

But there has always been something about the ST... something indefinable that has always made it special to me. My first ST was always special. It had its own personality. Even the replacement (with the next generation of TOS 1.x) was different. Yes, hard drive access was faster, and there were a few other changes that made it "nice", but it just wasn't the same. Almost, but not quite. And with each iteration of machine, it was a little more removed from my 'baseline'. Yes, I still preferred using the Mega, the MegaSTE, STacy and TT more than a PC... it was still familiar and comfortable, and Geneva and NeoDesk gave me most of what I'd grown so accustomed to (I'd been a NeoDesk user for a long, long time). I miss those days. I really do. An 8 MHz processor, a megabyte of memory, an external 60 Meg hard drive and a 2400 baud modem... who could ask for anything more?

Well, that's it for this week, friends and neighbors. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

'Halo: Reach' Takes in \$200 Million in First 24 Hours

"Halo: Reach" generated \$200 million in sales in its first 24 hours in the U.S. and Europe, Microsoft announced Wednesday.

Those numbers make it the biggest entertainment launch of 2010 in the U.S., according to Microsoft, which said its sale numbers topped the three-day opening weekends of movies like "Iron Man 2," "Alice in Wonderland," and "Toy Story 3."

"'Halo: Reach' is the biggest game Microsoft has ever released, and its launch has already surpassed every game, movie, and entertainment launch this year," Phil Spencer, corporate vice president of Microsoft Game Studios, said in a statement. "Every major installment has grown in scope and popularity, firmly cementing the 'Halo' franchise as one of the most popular entertainment properties in the world over the past decade."

"Halo: Reach" went on sale at 12:01am on Tuesday morning. Thousands of retail stores opened their doors at midnight for eager fans to snatch up their copy of the popular video game. Larger launch events were also held in London, Seattle, Stockholm, Oslo, and at New York's Best Buy Theater in Times Square (above).

"Consumer demand for 'Halo: Reach' has been phenomenal, as we saw Monday night at the new Best Buy Theater in New York's Times Square and at more than 400 Best Buy stores across the U.S.," said Chris Homeister, senior vice president and general manager of the home entertainment group at Best Buy.

The first "Halo" game made its debut in 2001, and the franchise includes follow-ups "Halo 2," "Halo Wars," and "Halo 3: ODST." Microsoft released a beta version of "Halo: Reach" in May, which attracted more than 2.7 million players logging more than 16 million hours of game play.

Sedentary Gaming Gets A Shot in the Arm with Move

Sony Corp. gets gamers off the couch with its new motion controller, the PlayStation Move.

The Move is a sensitive device with extremely accurate character and object control. It's an attractively priced add-on to the PS3 system that allows gamers to enjoy a different breed of games they needed a Nintendo Wii to enjoy.

The Move sells for \$49.99, but you need the PlayStation Eye camera (\$39.99) to use it. And for titles where your character has to walk or run around, you also need the PlayStation Move navigation controller

(\$29.99).

The best bargain available at launch is the PlayStation Move bundle, which includes the Move and Eye devices and a title called "Sports Champions."

Move works by focusing the USB-connected Eye camera (attached to the PS3 and placed near the TV) on a glowing, color-changing rubber ball at the end of the motion controller. An internal gyroscope and accelerometer help determine the exact position you're holding the Move and how fast you're swinging it in any direction. The main "Move button" is most comfortably accessed with your thumb, and it's surrounded by the usual PlayStation controller action buttons.

The placement of the buttons and the feel of the controller seem comfortable and intuitive. The Move also sports a trigger button opposite the Move button for additional control.

"Sports Champions" (SCEA, \$39.99, rated E10-plus) includes disc golf, table tennis, fencing, archery, beach volleyball, bocce and a gladiator duel. I compared several of the sports with my experience on the "Wii Sports Resort" title.

Disc golf on the Wii is fun, but disc golf on PS3 using Move is a fuller experience. It's stunningly realistic, with challenging built-in opponents and detailed terrain. One minute I was scrambling for par through a cave entrance guarded by trees and waterfalls; the next moment, I was skipping my choice of discs over the top of an icy lake, hoping to win the match and unlock some new hidden opponents.

Gladiator Duel was also a blast to play. Using two Move controllers, I wielded a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. Both could be angled precisely to deliver and deflect blows. Finishing moves sent built-in opponents, like a blond girl named Boomer, crashing to ancient columns that surround your fighting stage.

Another decent title for Move's debut is "Kung Fu Rider" (SCEA, \$39.99, rated E10-plus). I played as Toby and spent all of my time on the run from some bad guys. Toby's getaway vehicle is a series of office chairs. Sounds silly, but the game was a lot of fun. I careened around cars and under repair-work barriers while spin-kicking bad guys in the face.

In "EyePet" (SCEE, \$39.99, rated E), a monkeylike virtual pet appeared to scamper around my room as it was presented on-screen. The Eye camera captured a live view of the room as I interacted with my pet, which I named Pip. It soon wore thin for me, but "EyePet" went over quite well with five children, all under age 6. Pip hopped around the children's legs and arms, and fell asleep as one child stroked his blue fur with the Move controller.

"EyePet" is equal parts weird and fun, but some games don't translate to the Move's capabilities quite as well.

"Racquet Sports" (Ubisoft, \$29.99, rated E), available this fall, opts for the doe-eyed cartoon characters similar to the Wii. But I didn't have much control over my player's movements or shot selection during the tennis and table tennis games.

I'm a veteran of the Tiger Woods series, both on consoles and the PC, but I've never felt less control over my shots than when swinging the

Move controller in "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11" (Electronic Arts, \$59.95). Even with practice, the Move took the fun out of this hallowed title, and everything felt like a punch shot that pulled up well short of the title.

One interesting title takes PlayStation 3 gaming with Move in a direction I hope will continue. In "Heavy Rain" (SCEA, \$59.99, rated M), I played as FBI profiler Norman Jayden. It was a new experience to open doors and drink orange juice while making those natural motions with the Move controller. Small icons appeared on the screen to help me learn how to interact with objects as the plot grew more dangerous and involved.

Sony has taken motion control leaps further than Nintendo Wii in terms of fine movements and detailed control; combine that with the full high-definition graphics offered by the PlayStation 3 system and the Move becomes a must-have device for the game shelf.

Four out of four stars.

Nintendo's Super Mario Bros. Turns 25

Last week the Sony PlayStation turned 15, and now Nintendo's iconic Super Mario Bros. franchise turns 25.

Microsoft on Tuesday released its much-anticipated "Halo: Reach" video game, but 25 years ago, it was all about Mario. The original game sold 40.24 million copies worldwide, popularized the side-scrolling format, and kicked off elements of the Mushroom Kingdom still in use today, Nintendo said.

"Stimulated by advancements in technologies, we have always enjoyed developing the Super Mario Bros. series," Nintendo designer and Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto said in a statement. "The Super Mario Bros. series has always taken advantage of the latest technologies and is the fruit of the creativity of a number of my hard-working friends working as a team."

To celebrate, Nintendo has set up a special anniversary Web site, which includes a video that features game-play footage from "Super Mario Bros." all the way through "Super Mario Bros. Galaxy 2." It also includes the Super Mario music and sound effects that are sure to be stuck in your head for the rest of the day.

PCMag will publish a more in-depth Super Mario Bros. retrospective on Wednesday, so check back tomorrow for a trip down memory lane.

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US Urges NATO To Build 'Cyber Shield'

NATO must build a "cyber shield" to protect the transatlantic alliance from any Internet threats to its military and economic infrastructures, a top US defence official said Wednesday.

Cyber security is a "critical element" for the 28-nation alliance to embrace at its summit of leaders in Lisbon on November 19-20, US Deputy Defence Secretary William Lynn said in Brussels.

"The alliance has a crucial role to play in extending a blanket of security over our networks," Lynn said.

"NATO has a nuclear shield, it is building a stronger and stronger defence shield, it needs a cyber shield as well," he said at a forum hosted by the Security & Defence Agenda think-tank.

The Pentagon's number two called for adopting the Cold War-era strategy of "collective defence" in the cyber arena.

"The Cold War concepts of shared warning apply in the 21st century to cyber security. Just as our air defences, our missile defences have been linked so too do our cyber defences need to be linked as well," Lynn said.

The US government estimates that more than 100 foreign intelligence agencies or governments try to hack into US systems "on a daily basis," he said, highlighting the magnitude of the challenge.

"I think they see the asymmetric advantage that can be gained through cyber technology," Lynn said.

The threat of cyber attacks was highlighted in Estonia, a NATO member, in 2007 when it suffered an assault that paralysed key business and government web services for days.

The Pentagon was forced to review its own digital security in 2008 after the most serious cyber attack on the US military's networks, which came from a tainted flash drive that was inserted in a military laptop in the Middle East.

Lynn said the Pentagon strategy has identified "five pillars" to cyber security: recognising cyberspace as the next domain of warfare; the need for active defences; the protection of critical infrastructure; enhancing collective defence; and the need to "marshall our technological prowess."

Lynn stressed that any cyber security strategy needs to take into account threats to critical infrastructure for economies such as power grids, transport systems and financial markets.

"NATO indeed needs to take decisive action to defend its networks," he said.

"I think at Lisbon we will see the kind of high-level leadership commitment to cyber defence. It's the foundation for any alliance effort," he said.

Lynn said he discussed cyber security at a meeting with NATO's decision-making body, the North Atlantic Council, in Brussels on Wednesday.

"I was very impressed with the unity of purpose and the similar vision that most nations in the alliance seem to have towards the cyber threat," he said.

Cybercrime Is World's Most Dangerous Criminal Threat

A crime epidemic is silently sweeping the globe as criminals turn our ever-increasing dependence on computers against us, and even the head of Interpol is not immune.

On Friday 300 of the world's top law enforcement officials concluded the first ever international police anti-cybercrime conference, facing the stark and growing threat from an estimated 105-billion-dollar illegal business.

And Ronald K. Noble, secretary general of the international police agency Interpol, told the cream of law enforcement from 56 countries that his identity had been "stolen" to create two Facebook profiles.

One of the impersonators used the fake profile to obtain information on fugitives targeted in a recent Interpol-led operation seeking on-the-run criminals convicted of serious offences, including rape and murder.

"Cybercrime is emerging as a very concrete threat," he said at the opening ceremony of the first Interpol Information Security Conference at Hong Kong's police headquarters on Wednesday.

"Considering the anonymity of cyberspace, it may in fact be one of the most dangerous criminal threats we will ever face."

And terrorists could also inflict a significant blow with a cyberattack on a nation's infrastructure, he added.

"Just imagine the dramatic consequences of an attack, let's say, on a country's electricity grid or banking system," he said.

"We have been lucky so far that terrorists did not - at least successfully or at least of which we are aware - launch cyberattacks.

"One may wonder if this is a matter of style. Terrorists may prefer the mass media coverage of destroyed commuter trains, buildings brought down, to the anonymous collapse of the banking system. But until when?"

The scale of the problem was also highlighted at the Asia launch of a new report, also in Hong Kong, on Thursday by Internet security firm Symantec.

Almost two thirds of all adult web users globally have fallen victim to some sort of cybercrime, the 2011 Norton Cybercrime Report: The Human Impact study says, from spam email scams to having their credit card details stolen.

China had the most cybercrime victims, at 83 percent of web users, followed by India and Brazil, at 76 percent each, and then the US, at 73 percent.

The study, of over 7,000 Internet users, also found that 80 percent of

people believed the perpetrators would never be brought to justice. Fewer than half ever bother to report the crime to police.

Stacey Wu, a Symantec senior director, told AFP that just one of the firm's offices - in Chengdu, China - alone detects 100,000 cybercrime threats every single day.

"It is no longer just high school kids in their bedrooms sending out malicious emails," she said. "It's organised criminals.

"They carry out silent, hit-and-run attacks that steal relatively small amounts of 20 dollars or so from 20 or 30 people. Then they move on."

Cybercriminals also trade in data stolen, often unnoticed, from a victim's computer. Credit card details, for instance, are sold on the black market for between five and 20 dollars.

"Identity and personal information theft is a big problem," Wu told AFP. "For example, if the criminal knows a person makes a lot of transactions online, the value of that person's information can be worth a lot more."

Cybercrime is worth an estimated 105 billion dollars, according to rival computer security firm McAfee, and US police say cybercriminals can earn around 23,000 dollars a week.

The biggest problem, and the criminal's greatest advantage, is complacency, says Professor Joseph Kee-Yin Ng, treasurer of the Internet Society Hong Kong.

"It is hugely important for people and companies to protect themselves," he told AFP. "The criminal is as real as any thief or mugger, you just can't see them."

HDCP Master Key May Have Leaked

If the rumours are true, and if this Pastebin post (be sure to mirror the key if that won't get you in trouble with your authorities) is legitimate, then it looks like High-bandwidth Digital Content Protection has been cracked so hard its mother's mother felt it. HDCP is a copy protection mechanism which protects the audio and video streams sent over DisplayPort, HDMI, and DVI.

HDCP is an invention from Intel, which secures the data path between playback device (source) and receiver (sink). Each source and sink device has its own private key, generated in such a way that each pair can decrypt the data sent from source to sink without revealing the actual keys in use. To achieve this, each key - source and sink - has to be generated from the same master key.

As early as 2001 people warned that it would only take about 50 source/sink keys to be able to generate the master key, and if the rumours are indeed true, then this has finally happened over the past few weeks. There's also the possibility that the key has been leaked instead of generated, but the author of a 2001 paper warning about the possibility to generate the key doesn't think this is the case.

The master key is a 40x40 matrix of 56-bit numbers. While the web has

been buzzing about this one for a few days now, it's a little difficult to ascertain the validity of the claims made. Assuming the master key is indeed legitimate, it wouldn't be of much use for average consumers at this point, as Ars Technica's Peter Bright explains.

"This is unlikely to be of much interest to the typical consumer - most people don't have digital capture devices anyway - but it does mean that someone suitably motivated could build an HDCP sink device that could decrypt incoming HDCP data and produce full fidelity digital streams, and that this device could never be blocked," Bright argues, "Such a system would be of interest both to pirates and those with legitimate data archival needs."

Still, if the master key is real, it could start to bring an end to the myriad of incompatibility issues people encounter when mixing and matching HDMI/DVI/etc. devices - such as a PS3 not being able to use a certain monitor, or a Blu-Ray disc not playing in your player.

There isn't a whole lot the HDCP licensing company, Digital Content Protection, can do about this, save for starting over with a brand new master key. However, this is not a likely course of action since it would be incompatible with all devices still using the old master key. On top of that - such a possible new master key would be cracked in the same way eventually.

So, yet another epic fail on the DRM front, proving once again that DRM is a total and utter waste of money, and that the concept only serves to encumber legitimate consumers. I guess the content industry hasn't been beaten hard enough just yet.

US Court Upholds EULAs, Criminalises Pretty Much All of Us

Remember the Vernor v. Autodesk case? We talked about this one before - about a year ago, a US judge sided with Vernor, declaring that software is sold, not licensed. I think I need to freshen everyone's memory up a bit on this one, so let's get going.

Timothy Vernor had bought up several disks, including the licenses, of Autodesk's AutoCAD software from an architecture firm. The software was no longer in use, so Vernor figured he could easily resell it on eBay. Autodesk, however, did not agree with this, arguing that the software was licensed, not sold; the license was non-transferable, old copies had to be destroyed, and you could not carry the physical disks outside of the Western hemisphere (I'm not making this up). Vernor was violating the license, Autodesk stated, and issued a DMCA takedown.

Vernor, for his part, then sued Autodesk, arguing that he never agreed to anything - he didn't actually use the software, he merely bought it only to resell it straight away. This case has been going through the courts for a while now. About a year ago, judge Richard A. Jones, after seeing the undisputed facts, sided with Vernor on /every possible account/, making it very clear that while Autodesk owns the copyright to AutoCAD, the copies in question belonged to Vernor. This was a slam-dunk win, but Autodesk appealed.

And now we're here: the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has today overturned Judge Jones' decision on every possible account, siding

with Autodesk all the way (.pdf version of the ruling. The court argues that the First Sale doctrine does not apply in this case, because Vernor had not bought the software from legitimate owners - the architecture firm had merely licensed the software.

The court further stated that whatever is in the license is binding, no matter how ridiculous. A ban on resale? A ban on lending? A ban on carrying the physical disks outside of the Western hemisphere? Forcing people to physically destroy their old disks? All perfectly legal, according to the court. In the official words of the courts:

We determine that Autodesk's direct customers are licensees of their copies of the software rather than owners, which has two ramifications. Because Vernor did not purchase the Release 14 copies from an owner, he may not invoke the first sale doctrine, and he also may not assert an essential step defense on behalf of his customers. For these reasons, we vacate the district court's grant of summary judgment to Vernor and remand for further proceedings.

The court has devised a test to determine whether software is sold or licensed. "First, we consider whether the copyright owner specifies that a user is granted a license. Second, we consider whether the copyright owner significantly restricts the user's ability to transfer the software. Finally, we consider whether the copyright owner imposes notable use restrictions."

So, there you have it.

And I haven't even touched upon the part of the ruling that really scared the living daylights out of me. The ruling also addresses the "significant policy considerations raised by the parties and amici on both sides of this appeal". Siding with Autodesk we have the Software & Information Industry Association and the Motion Picture Association of America - whose arguments all align perfectly with the court decision.

On the side of Vernor we have eBay and the American Library Association, who argue that ruling against Vernor will seriously hurt libraries and the creation of secondary markets for copyrighted works.

The ruling simply dismisses Vernor's, eBay's and the ALA's arguments without even looking at them. The court focuses on two precedents from the same court, Wise and the MAI trio, and tries very hard to make their current decision compatible with those two precedent cases. "These are serious contentions on both sides, but they do not alter our conclusion that our precedent from Wise through the MAI trio requires the result we reach," the court states.

This seems odd to me. Someone obviously has to enlighten me on this, but if Wise and the MAI trio were ruled by the same court, and were apparently policy-setting, shouldn't it then be possible for the court to re-evaluate these rulings in light of our new digital age? I mean, Wise is from 1977, and the MAI trio from 1993, 1995, and 2006.

Which brings me to the final issue that I personally have with a ruling like this. Here in The Netherlands we have a traffic rule which states that in case of an accident between a motorised vehicle and a non-motorised participant (pedestrian or a bike), the burden of proof always lies with the motorised vehicle, because motorised vehicles pose additional risks to pedestrians and bikes, who are classified as "weaker" traffic participants. This rule acknowledges that e.g. car drivers carry additional

responsibilities.

When I read about disputes between individuals and large companies or government institutions in The Netherlands, I get the feeling that the same mentality is prevalent in the Dutch court system; i.e., a mentality to protect the weaker of the two parties - in this case, the individual. That is, a court decision should not unfairly burden an individual when the damage done to the large company or government institution is minimal by comparison.

In the case of Vernor v. Autodesk, it would seem that the damage done to Autodesk is pretty much zero, while the benefits of allowing software - and their copyrighted works - to be resold unconditionally far outweigh the damage done to Autodesk. As such, it just seems fairer - in the short and long run - for the court to side with Vernor. It just makes more sense.

Remember, siding with Vernor would be just as possible within US law as siding with Autodesk - it's the precedent cases that make the deal here. You'd think these older decisions ought to be viewed in a different light after the digital revolution.

In any case, only Congress can do anything about this now (note from OSNews reader chandler: "Absolutely wrong. This was a ruling by a panel of the 9th circuit. It can be overturned in an en banc hearing or by the Supreme Court - and an en banc hearing is plausible if it contradicts previous rulings of the 9th circuit."). Whatever is in an EULA is now legally binding, the large corporations win again, and the consumer can suck a big fat popsicle. With this ruling, I think pretty much every OSNews reader has been turned into a criminal - I can assure you each and every one of us has, at one point, violated one of the licenses of our software.

Samsung Launches Galaxy Tablet for U.S. Market

Samsung Electronics has struck deals with four U.S. carriers to begin selling a Google Android-powered tablet computer during the coming holiday season, taking on Apple Inc's iPad on its home turf.

Samsung on Thursday announced details of its new 7-inch touchscreen Galaxy, to be sold through Verizon Wireless, Sprint Nextel, T-Mobile and AT&T, which also carries the iPad.

The Korean electronics giant has secured deals with Viacom's MTV Networks and Paramount and NBC Universal, which ComCast Corp is buying, to buy or stream TV episodes, full television seasons, and new and old movies.

Unlike the iPad, the Galaxy - which shares many of the same features as the Galaxy S smart phone launched during the summer - has front- and back-facing cameras for video conferencing, Samsung said in a statement.

It runs on Google's fledgling Android operating system, which has taken market share away from Apple, and has access to some 80,000 applications on the Google apps store.

Acer Reportedly Developing Dual-Touchscreen Laptop

Acer is working on a dual-touchscreen multitouch laptop with no physical keyboard or mouse that would be available by fall 2011, according to several reports. Instead of using physical inputs, one touchscreen would function as the display and one would act as the keyboard and trackpad, similar to Toshiba's Libretto W100.

Acer's device is reportedly sporting two 15-inch touchscreens, runs Windows 7 and has an Intel Core i5 2.67GHz processor under the hood, according to TechReview Source.

No further specs about the device are available, such as RAM, storage capacity, or whether it will handle pen-based touch inputs as well as Windows 7's multitouch.

However, Acer's device could be the largest dual-screen laptop so far. Toshiba's limited edition Libretto W100 features two 7-inch touchscreens.

Computer manufacturer MSI was showing off a dual-touchscreen laptop with 10-inch screens during the Consumer Electronics Show in January.

Asus has also been discussing a smaller dual-touchscreen device called the Eee Reader since early 2009.

If you take a quick look at Intel's current list of Core i5 processors, you'll notice the only processor that fits TechReviewSource's specs is the Core i5 750, a desktop chip. It's not unheard of for a manufacturer to try and cram a desktop processor into a laptop, just look at the Eurocomm D901C Phantom-X, for example. But what's more likely is that the rumored Acer laptop is sporting the equally rumored Intel Core i5 580M. The 580M reportedly runs at 2.66GHz and could be available before the end of the year.

Another possibility is that the rumored device would not run a Core i5 at all, but the Intel Core i7 620M launched in January.

TechReviewSource claims it is trying to get a video of Acer's dual screen laptop in action, but an anonymous source tells the blog Acer's prototype is "slow and buggy." That wouldn't be surprising considering the device is supposed to be in development and wouldn't launch until late 2011.

But a 15-inch dual screen laptop is an awfully large and presumably expensive device to produce - especially when it's not clear if anyone would even want a dual-touchscreen laptop. However, Engadget reported in August that the Libretto W100 sold very quickly during its debut on Amazon.

So, who knows? Maybe double-screened laptops are the future, as electronics makers experiment with virtual keyboards in place of physical keys on more than just mobile devices.

Yahoo To Upgrade E-mail, Search Results This Fall

Yahoo Inc. wants to prove it has regained its technological stride after years of meandering that have caused the Internet company to lose ground to its rivals.

The proof of Yahoo's renewed vigor will come this fall when the company plans to unveil facelifts to its free e-mail service and search results, a top executive told reporters Thursday.

Those upgrades will be major steps toward "bringing cool back to Yahoo," said Blake Irving, who was hired as the company's chief products officer in April.

Over the next three years, Yahoo will be quickly rolling out more innovations that will give people more reasons to stay on Yahoo's website for longer periods and reel in more revenue from advertisers clamoring to reach a more engaged audience.

Although Irving is relatively new to the company, his goals echo those of other Yahoo executives, including some from prior regimes that crumbled after failing to fulfill their promises. Former Yahoo CEO, Terry Semel, even played a Frank Sinatra song, "The Best Is Yet To Come," at a 2004 investment conference to underscore his resolve to recapture the buzz that helped make Yahoo the most successful Internet company during the 1990s.

Instead, Yahoo fell even further behind Google Inc. and now it's trying to reverse a recent shift that is driving more people and advertisers to Facebook's popular online hangout.

The troubles have battered Yahoo's stock, which has lost more than half its value since another CEO, co-founder Jerry Yang, turned down an opportunity to sell the entire company to Microsoft Corp. for \$47.5 billion, or \$33 per share, in May 2008.

Irving, a former Microsoft Corp. executive, believes Yahoo's strengths have been overlooked both by investors and the media. Among other things, Yahoo still has about 600 million worldwide users and a pool of engineers that Irving believes is among the brightest in the world.

"I expected to find some good, some bad and a lot of ugly here," Irving said. "There is a lot more good than I expected."

That's a theme Irving's boss, Carol Bartz, has been emphasizing since she was brought in as CEO 20 months ago to orchestrate a turnaround. Although analysts have praised Bartz for sharpening Yahoo's focus and shedding unprofitable services, Yahoo's stock price and financial performance have remained lackluster since her arrival. Bartz has repeatedly said it could take several years before Yahoo begins hitting on all cylinders again.

Rather than fight Facebook, Yahoo has been trying to piggyback on the social network by enabling its e-mail users to interact with their Facebook circle of friends from their inboxes. The company will build upon that effort this fall when e-mail users will be able to start sending the short messages known as tweets to their Twitter accounts. Yahoo's e-mail also is supposed to run twice as fast with the upcoming upgrade.

The company, based in Sunnyvale, Calif., declined to provide a precise timetable for its latest e-mail overhaul. It has been working on the e-mail revisions for more than a year already.

To lower its expenses, Yahoo is relying on Microsoft for most of the search results on its website.

But Yahoo is still trying to distinguish its search results by packaging some of its recommendations differently than Microsoft's Bing does.

The latest changes to Yahoo's search results will debut sometime this fall when the company will start bundling more key information in a capsule that will be highlighted above links from other sites. For instance, a search for Lady Gaga will contain different strips within the capsule that show pictures of her, popular songs and video clips.

Microsoft's New IE9 Promises Zipper Performance

Microsoft Corp. unveiled the "beta" test version of Internet Explorer 9 on Wednesday, the first of a new generation of Web browser programs that tap into the powerful processors on board newer computers to make websites load and run faster.

IE9, which is free, also arrives with a more minimalist look and a few new tricks that start to blur the distinction between a website and a traditional desktop application.

Following the lead of Google Inc.'s stripped-down Chrome browser, Microsoft's IE9 comes with far fewer buttons, icons and toolbars cluttering up the top of the screen. Its frame is translucent, and as people browse the Web, IE9 can be subtly adorned with small icons and signature colors of the websites being viewed.

The new browser also takes cues from Windows 7, Microsoft's most recent operating system software for personal computers. In Windows 7, people can "pin" favorite programs to the task bar at the bottom of the screen, creating a one-click shortcut. They can also customize a menu of options for each program, such as opening a frequently used file in Microsoft Word.

IE9 lets people pin individual websites to the taskbar, and some sites have already customized their so-called "jump list" menus. For example, when people pin USA Today's site, the icon in the taskbar can display a menu that mirrors the color-coded sections of the newspaper.

The aesthetic changes bring IE9 in line with Microsoft's newer software, but the changes under the hood push Microsoft's technology a step ahead of its competition. The browser can take advantage of multicore microprocessors to crunch website code faster. It also uses the PC's graphics processing unit - the same chips that make the images in elaborate video games run smoothly - to make images, animations, movie clips and other visuals appear or play faster.

And IE9 supports HTML5, a catch phrase for an updated set of rules and specifications that website programmers use. HTML5, which is currently under development, will include video playback and other graphics-intensive features that, in the past, could only be done by adding third-party software.

"What I saw impressed me," said Endpoint Technologies Associates analyst Roger Kay, who attended Microsoft's media event to promote the new browser in San Francisco Wednesday. "The bottom line is, this product is good. It's pretty and it's fast."

Microsoft won't stand alone at the front of the pack for long, however. Google and Mozilla, maker of the Firefox browser, are also working on similar technical upgrades to their software. All three players have different motivations for pouring resources into making their free programs stand out from the pack.

For Microsoft, selling Windows is a massive and profitable slice of its business. Dean Hachamovitch, corporate vice president of Microsoft's Internet Explorer group, said the software maker is driven by the desire to make Web browsing on a Windows PC "great." That, he said, will encourage people to keep buying Windows computers, rather than defect to Apple Inc.'s Mac machines.

Google, which makes most of its money from online advertising, simply wants to encourage people to spend more time surfing the Web. The Web search leader says it introduced the speedy Chrome two years ago in part to prod the market's dominant players to accelerate Web surfing.

And Mozilla, a nonprofit, sees its own browser development as a way to make sure that users' privacy and the tenets of free, open-source software don't get left behind as Google, Microsoft and others try to shape technology in ways that boost profits.

With the new crop of browsers, the companies are doing more than competing against each other. IE9 has arrived at a time when the future of traditional Web surfing is itself in question. Today, people can skip visiting many websites in favor of "apps" available for download for devices such as Apple's iPhone and iPad, or Google's Android mobile phones. The apps deliver the same content but don't limit people to pointing and clicking links with a mouse.

The new browser works on PCs with Windows 7 or Vista, but not on PCs with the much more widely used Windows XP computers or on Macs. At the media event, Microsoft showed off several big-name websites that have been designed to take advantage of the new browser, including ones from Amazon.com Inc., Facebook and Twitter. The sites are built with code that older browsers can understand, but some may be sluggish without IE9.

Microsoft did not say when IE9 will leave the test phase, but the final version isn't likely to change much. It is available for download at beautyoftheweb.com.

Windows XP Users Can't Ride the IE9 Train

The release of Internet Explorer 9 beta garnered a lot of attention and positive reviews. Cribbing from Chrome's UI and significantly boosting speed over previous iterations of the browser, IE9 looks like a real winner. Too bad Microsoft left Windows XP users - more than half of all Windows users - out in the cold.

In a statement to The Register, Ryan Gavin, senior director of IE business and marketing, said Windows XP users couldn't download IE9. Not now; not ever. Instead, Microsoft plans to "continue to focus on how we do a great job with Windows 7," Gavin said.

According to recent stats, Windows XP represents the vast majority of the OS market with more than 53 percent. Windows 7 has only 22 percent.

The roadblock here is that XP doesn't have the capabilities required to support the hardware acceleration and HTML5 features of IE9. The hardware acceleration in IE9, according to The Register, comes courtesy of DirectX 10 - an update to the DirectX program that does not run on Windows XP unless it's been "modified." But quick Web search shows a handful of sites where DirectX 10 can be downloaded onto machines running XP, which leads me to believe that eventually someone will find a way to dump IE9 on XP, whether Microsoft likes it or not.

That Microsoft is keeping IE9 exclusive to those running Vista SP2 or higher seems like a foolish move that is likely to inspire millions to find an alternative browser, such as Firefox or Chrome. This could further damage IE's current supremacy of the browser market. All versions of Internet Explorer combined currently dominate with 60.4 percent of the Web browser market. Firefox has 22.93 percent, and Chrome has 7.52 percent.

Barring XP users also seems like a sneaky ploy to get more people to upgrade to Windows 7. I can't imagine many people would be so discouraged by the news that they cannot download a beta browser that they'd drop hundreds on an OS upgrade.

So while predictions have it that IE9 will crush the browser competition, over half of Windows users won't get a chance to play around with it. Chrome Beta, anyone?

Chrome 7 Will Get 60 Times Faster, Google Says

Microsoft's hardware-accelerated Internet Explorer 9 may be dominating the headlines this week, but Chrome isn't waiting around for the dust to settle.

Not only did Google release a slew of patches affecting various vulnerabilities in the current version of the browser on Tuesday, but it also announced that new GPU acceleration advances in the upcoming version 7 are achieving speeds 60 times faster than in version 6.

Chrome has traditionally been considered the browser to beat when it comes to speed.

"This system picks the best graphics API to use on each OS that Chromium supports: Windows XP/Vista/7, Mac OS and Linux," Google software engineers James Robinson and Gregg Tavares wrote on the Chromium Blog.

"These early numbers show up to 60x speed improvement over the current version of Google Chrome," they added. "With Google Chrome's fast release cycles, we expect to be able to get these enhancements to users quickly and add new performance improvements over time."

The latest beta version of Mozilla's Firefox 4 also uses hardware acceleration for faster speeds.

In addition to rapid advances in Chrome's 2D graphics performance, however, Google is also working on 3D graphics capabilities.

"We're excited to give developers fast 2D graphics, but we think truly hardware accelerating graphics on the Web means giving developers access

to a programmable 3D graphics pipeline with WebGL," Robinson and Tavares explained. "With WebGL and 3D CSS, developers can create modern games, impressive photo galleries, 3D data visualizations, virtual environments, and whatever else they can dream up."

A video on YouTube demonstrates Chrome's upcoming 3D capabilities in action.

A developer version of Chrome 7 is now available, with a stable release expected later this fall.

The 10 security patches Google released this week for Chrome 6, meanwhile, addressed one critical flaw in the Mac version along with six considered high-priority, including one unique to the Linux version. Three vulnerabilities were considered low-priority.

Through the Chromium Security Research Program, Google offers users, developers and researchers bounties of up to \$3,133 for reporting a single bug. This time, Google handed out six \$500 awards and one worth \$1,000.

The resulting version - Google Chrome 6.0.472.59 - has now been released to the Stable and Beta channels for Windows, Mac, and Linux.

Chattanooga Utility Offering Fast Internet Service

Chattanooga's city-owned electrical utility has started offering an Internet service that is among the fastest in the world, and it is hoping the move will attract businesses looking to relocate.

The Chattanooga Electric Power Board's new Fiber Optics network will provide a 1 gigabit-per-second Internet service. The utility said the service is more than 200 times faster than the average national download speed today.

At a cost of \$350 a month, it's also much more expensive than the typical residential plan. Harold DePriest, the Chattanooga Electric Power Board's president and CEO, said residential customers don't really need that fast a service, but businesses might.

He said the high-speed service won't be costly for EPB to operate, yet it should put the Chattanooga community at the forefront of attracting businesses - possibly Internet providers - that can benefit from having it.

"Chattanooga represents the next frontier in communications technology, with limitless potential for new applications for education, entertainment, health care, industrial development and more," DePriest said in a statement.

The Chattanooga utility is working with telecom equipment maker Alcatel-Lucent SA on the project.

DePriest said the fast Internet service is immediately available.

DePriest said providing the high-speed Internet service is part of the utility's \$37 million fiber-optic network venture.

EPB provides electricity, television, telephone and Internet service to

more than 169,000 residents in a 600 square-mile area in southeastern Tennessee and northwest Georgia.

In a community with a new Volkswagen new assembly plant and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's SimCenter computational engineering lab, Mayor Ron Littlefield said the Internet service announcement has helped put Chattanooga "on the short list of progressive communities in the world."

"It's a great place to imagine the future," Littlefield said at a news conference Monday.

He said Chattanooga would "welcome Google or any other technology company" that would be interested in using such a high-speed Internet system.

Google Inc. earlier announced plans to select one or more communities for a 1 gigabit network by the end of this year and spokesman Dan Martin said there have been about 1,100 responses. Martin declined comment about the planned service by Chattanooga's EPB.

"We're excited to see enthusiasm for ultra high-speed broadband," Martin said in an e-mail statement. "It's clear that people across the country are hungry for better and faster Internet access."

Verizon Communications Inc. in August said it had tested 1 gigabit service on its network but the company hasn't announced any plans to sell it.

FCC Paving the Way to "Wi-Fi on Steroids"

The FCC will vote next week to make the white space portion of the television broadcast spectrum publicly available for use in wireless networks. If approved, it could enable a new generation of "Wi-Fi on steroids" devices capable of transmitting data through walls and over much greater distances than current wireless technologies.

Broadcast television networks and organizations that rely on wireless microphones have opposed the use of the broadcast spectrum white space, citing fears that data transmitted in that range will interfere with their signals. The FCC has developed a framework designed to prevent any disruption of existing service, though, and is now set to move forward.

The FCC has worked with the concerned parties and come up with a plan that ensures that devices using the white space spectrum will not interfere with adjacent broadcasts. The FCC has mapped TV channels and major wireless microphone usage (such as the Broadway theater district in New York City, or major sports arenas), and will require that wireless devices using the white space be configured to avoid the frequencies in use in a given area. Devices could be built to be location-aware, and automatically configure themselves based on information in the database.

The pros seem to heavily outweigh the cons for opening up the spectrum white space for use by wireless networks. The "super Wi-Fi" possible in the broadcast white space has a range of several miles, rather than the length of a football field, and it is capable of traveling through obstructions like walls. With a range like that, and speeds rivaling cable modem broadband, it is easy to see how this could open up a whole new realm of wireless technologies and fundamentally change how and where

wireless is used.

Of course, there are two sides to the "Wi-Fi on steroids" story. Businesses and consumers today are still struggling to understand and implement effective wireless network security. If you can drive down the street and find random unprotected wireless networks with the current range limitations, imagine how many unsecured wireless networks you could detect if the signal could travel farther and go through walls. With a wireless network that extends beyond walls and covers a greater range, security will be even more critical.

For now, the white space spectrum is not yet available, and the devices and technology needed to take advantage of it don't yet exist in the mainstream. All that could change, though, when the FCC meets next week, and "super Wi-Fi" enabled devices could begin emerging by early next year.

GoDaddy.com Puts Itself Up for Sale

Internet domain name registry GoDaddy.com has put itself up for sale, the Wall Street Journal reported on Friday.

The privately held company could fetch more than \$1 billion in an auction, the report said, citing people familiar with the matter.

GoDaddy has hired investment bank Qatalyst Partners, the Journal reported. Private equity firms are expected to bid.

The company declined to comment.

GoDaddy is the world's largest domain name registrar. The company was founded by Bob Parsons in 1997, and says it has more than 43 million domains under management.

The company posted revenue between \$750 million and \$800 million in 2009, the report said.

GoDaddy has made a name for itself by running racy television ads to promote its brand, some of them featuring race car driver Danica Patrick.

Engineer Fired for Privacy Violations, Google Says

A Google engineer was fired for violating the company's privacy rules, Google said Wednesday, responding to a report that the engineer had improperly accessed the accounts of several teenagers.

"We dismissed David Barksdale for breaking Google's strict internal privacy policies," said Bill Coughran, senior vice president of Google, in a statement.

Barksdale was fired in July because he abused his position as a site reliability engineer at Google office to access Google Voice call records and Gmail and Google Chat accounts belonging to several teenagers, according to Gawker.

As a site reliability engineer, Barksdale had access to databases that contain e-mails, chat logs and other files that belong to Google users, the report said.

Google acknowledged the seriousness of the privacy violations, but said there would always be a need for its engineers to have this level of access to user accounts.

"We carefully control the number of employees who have access to our systems, and we regularly upgrade our security controls - for example, we are significantly increasing the amount of time we spend auditing our logs to ensure those controls are effective. That said, a limited number of people will always need to access these systems if we are to operate them properly - which is why we take any breach so seriously," Coughran said.

Trojan Monitors Your Porn Surfing Habits, Threatens to Blackmail You

In an era where online privacy seems like an oxymoron, is it so bad to have your browsing history publicly available? Or to pay less than \$20 to have these details removed from the Internet?

Several Trojan horses spreading around the Internet these days spam your entire address book with bogus messages and attempt to delete your computer's security software. But the Kenzero Trojan out of Japan goes further than pretending to be a legitimate program: Hackers behind the program not only post your browser history, favorites, illegally-downloaded porn, and clipboard content to a public Website, they demand payment of about \$18 to remove the personal details of your browsing history.

Kenzero is a Trojan of the 'ransomware' variety, where a malicious program masquerading as a game registration window takes your personal details then attempts to extort money out of you.

The Trojan then posts that you've been downloading illegal Hentai (explicit anime) games, and that instead of just being out \$20, you'll find that scammers have sold your credit card information to the highest bidder. How does Kenzero spread? Mostly via the Winny file-sharing network, which has approximately 200 million users).

Though if you're illegalizing downloading computer games, why would you give personal details to a pirated piece of software? It's food for thought. While you're mulling that, there's even a paper on similar Japanese scams being presented at the upcoming Association for Computing Machinery Computer and Communications Security conference.

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